FIRST – WHO I AM AND WHY I WRITE

AN ESSAY BY

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I was born in 1941 in Leavenworth, a small town of about two thousand people in central Washington state. The primary economy was lumber and fruit orchards. (wow, has that changed) My sister was born in 1943 and my father left us sometime in that period, so we moved in with my grandparents for my earliest memories.

My mother re-married in 1948 to a Catholic man. Most of Mom's family were Protestant, some more active in religion and others very little. I enjoyed going to Mass and was baptized as a Catholic in 1949, the beginning of my faith journey. The Confraternity of Catholic Doctrine (CCD), and the Baltimore Catechism were the building blocks of my faith as taught by the priests, several parents and nuns for summer Bible School. Mom and Dad had three boys over the next fifteen years, the youngest just a few months before my own son was born.

My mother was the youngest of nine children and most of her family lived in the area. Dad had a brother and three sisters also nearby, so I was raised with lots of extended family – grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. We were together frequently throughout my childhood. Almost every family had a garden, and we also had chickens. Self-sufficient to the extent possible.

It was a very outdoors environment – mountains, rivers, creeks and lakes. I walked a short distance to school and rode my bike everywhere. A friend and I hiked and fished in the summer. In middle school, I started working in my uncle's apple orchard and continued working in different orchards every summer and fall through high school for a little income to support some of my own expenses.

I was a good student and mediocre athlete, a competitive skier in the winter and track in the spring. My junior year, I knew I wanted to go to college and selected Seattle University (SU), a Jesuit Catholic college, relatively close, reasonably accessible and affordable. I got a school catalog with the entire curriculum and chose Civil Engineering for my major. I applied for a scholarship and received a tuition grant for my first year.

I was seventeen when I moved into the dorm to start my freshman year in 1959. Every student had to take a minimum credit level of theology and philosophy which I completed. Every male had to take ROTC, but I had a medical condition that precluded that requirement, just as the Vietnam War was getting started. So, I had no military experience as many of my peers did. I was a devoted and active Catholic throughout college.

My most enjoyable extracurricular activity at SU was the hiking club. There are lots of mountain trails and lakes within driving distance from Seattle and we hiked frequently on Sundays after early Mass. We had an old bus we loaded up at 8am and drove to a trailhead for a day hike. We occasionally stayed overnight during the school year and did several overnight hikes in the summers. I met my wife-to-be in my second summer on a hike to Mt. Rainier. We dated through that summer, with enough mutual attraction for her to attend SU that fall. We got engaged that winter and married in September 1962. I was twenty and she was nineteen. Our son was born in August 1963 while I still had another year and half of school to complete. Needless to say, I worked part-time

throughout my college years, and full-time in the summers, fortunately all in engineering-related work.

I graduated in early spring of 1964, and we moved to southern Oregon for a job with the US Forest Service for the start of my professional career. I had worked previously for the USFS during two summers on survey crews. We moved back to Leavenworth for a different USFS job and bought our first little farm home outside of town. We had our two daughters there.

In 1966 we moved to Bainbridge Island, a ferry ride across Puget Sound from downtown Seattle and I worked for a private consulting firm on a variety of civil works projects. In 1968 I changed to another consulting firm so I could specialize in land development work as a licensed civil engineer and land surveyor. When land development came to a screeching halt, my work changed to streets and utilities with a state-wide program for urban arterial improvements.

In 1973, the firm contracted with the City of Bellevue for my full-time work on-site as project manager for a large urban arterial project, three miles in length, through an urbanized community that had developed under the county but now was a part of the city with growing city traffic. That led me to permanently join the city Public Works Department in 1975. I worked for the next 25 years in various managerial positions in Public Works, streets and utilities.

In 1974, I joined the American Public Works Association for people in the US and Canada working in the broad public works field. We had state-wide semi-annual conferences, a lot of training opportunities and many meetings which I was privileged to benefit. I was actively involved for 30 years, including serving in all the Washington Chapter offices and quite a bit of national activities, including annual conventions around the country. In 1990, I joined two other colleagues from the Washington Chapter on a People-to-People delegation to Russia with a number of public works professionals from around the country.

I was very active in my local Catholic parishes at each place we lived from 1964 to 2019 when I retired from active involvement.

As I was approaching retirement, I felt I needed to choose and develop some kind of hobby or extracurricular activity. I chose writing and signed up for a correspondence course with the Long Ridge Writer’s Group in Connecticut. They provided course material in a large notebook, and I progressed through lessons and mailed in assignments which they critiqued and moved me forward through completion. My interest was in writing about my anticipated travel experiences. Some of that traveling did take place but I didn’t end up writing about it.

The City encouraged employees to actively participate in exercise programs to keep physically fit and I started jogging a few days a week, a habit I maintained for 20 years or so. While running, I would regularly pray and think about my faith. The more I did that, the more inspiration I developed to expand my thoughts about my faith. Over the next 20 years, I wrote over 100 essays considering many different topics.

After I retired, I obtained a business license and continued to work as a consultant with many of my professional colleagues on a variety of projects that I could do by myself or

with other consultants. I also worked for FEMA on disaster recovery and mitigation around the country for five years.

After fully retiring, I continued to write essays about my faith and decided that I could collect and organize them into a full book. I self-published *A Window Into My Soul in 2016*. (I still have lots of copies if you're interested)

As I was completing that book, I was inspired to write a more comprehensive overview of my faith which resulted in my second book, *Life AFTER Death – Choices and Consequences* self-published in 2025. It's now available for free to everyone on this Internet Archive website.

My goal is to understand and write, to the best of my ability, about the objective truth of my faith which may or may not align with traditional Catholic teaching. The Church of course has thousands of years of knowledge and tradition from thousands of saints and historic teachers of our faith. And the Church teaches that it alone has the sole authority, acting through the Pope and Magisterium, to determine the truth about matters of faith. It would be easier to trust in that teaching as the unimpeachable truth; I wish that was so.

But I still find a number of issues that, to me, seem contradictory to the objective reality of what has historically happened and how some things of religious concern really work. The easiest example of that contradiction is the story of creation in Genesis. It is not literally or objectively true. I believe in the scientific reality of the formation of the cosmos but also don't believe in the scientific disregard of God and the real understanding of creation.

So, that's my challenge – to better understand the objective truth about my faith, and to write about it.

In another essay, I'll address one of the overarching concepts of creation – time – and how it relates to the big picture of how we got to this point in history in light of our faith in God's role and how things work.

And in another essay, I'll expand on the whole idea of truth and knowledge beyond my writing in *Life AFTER Death – Choices and Consequences.*

I continue to read new books and articles and have already started writing on other faith-related topics. You may see my new work for free on the Internet Archive website.